

L . A . C O U N T Y F I R E

# ON THE LINE

SUMMER 2006

A photograph of several firefighters in orange protective gear and green helmets. One firefighter in the foreground is using a hose to spray water, creating a large cloud of mist. Other firefighters are visible in the background, some looking towards the camera. The scene appears to be a training exercise or a live fire demonstration.

## LACoFD Expands C.E.R.T. Program

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**Fire Season  
Kicks Off**

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**Welcome  
Back Tessa!**

*KEEP UP TO DATE BY LOGGING IN @ [WWW.LACOFD.ORG](http://WWW.LACOFD.ORG)*



## It Doesn't Cost Anything to Care

Thirty years ago, a gallon of gasoline cost 40 cents and now it is nearly three dollars a gallon nationwide. It seems like the price of everything is going up all around us. One thing, however, has never cost a cent and never will: for one person to care about another.

In our busy world and experience, it is easy to let caring about others slip in rank on our personal list of priorities. However, in our Department, it will always rank high because caring for and about others is what we do. Without the caring and compassionate ways in which you serve our residents and support each other, our Department would be reduced to a cold conglomeration of equipment, buildings and supplies. Every day, LACoFD comes alive through dedicated and skillful public service. I continue to be pleased by the number of complimentary letters arriving each week from grateful residents, business owners, city officials and others in public safety. When someone takes the time to write, it means that what we did really stood out. In return, they let us know. Other than the stamp, it does not cost much but the message is invaluable.

Our Emergency Medical Services are second to none – not because of the latest equipment we have or the large number of paramedics, but because we sincerely care when someone needs our help during their medical emergencies. In that moment of crisis, we become one person helping another. LACoFD firefighters and paramedics take pride in knowing that they are well-trained and able to provide caring emergency medical service to anyone in need. Each of our paramedics and their family members endured considerable personal sacrifices of their time during the rigorous paramedic training process. Becoming a paramedic in our Department is a career milestone.

As an organizational family, we also care about each of our coworkers. When it comes to a personal medical crisis, such as the devastating diagnosis of cancer, we actively rally around in caring support. Recently, Fire Fighter Paramedic Mike Dubron, a three-year cancer survivor, founded the volunteer Firefighters Cancer Support Network to help provide cancer support services for fire service employees and their immediate family members. Wanting to reach out to provide comfort, strength and hope to others facing this disease, Mike worked quickly to form this independent, non-profit organization. Through monthly support group meetings and the coordination of helpful resources, the Firefighters Cancer Support Network is a wonderful addition to all that our organization provides to employees during medical crises.

On duty and off, the caring actions of our members continue to inspire me. I was thinking back to the time when we invited employees to select six core values from all of the suggestions submitted. I was not surprised to learn that “caring” made the final list. For more than 80 years now, our employees have demonstrated that it doesn't cost anything to care.



**Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman**



# Plant Vesta Automatic Call Distribution System

With the previous Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) System becoming outdated and no longer supported by the vendor, a need for a new system improvement was imperative in order to maintain continuous uninterrupted public safety service. On June 23,

verification. In fact, the most highlighted feature of this new system is the ability to quickly and easily map locations of wireless and landline calls. This is crucial for locating where calls originate. The program can be set to engage in multiple layer views which

has the capability to monitor the dispatcher's status and forward the next incoming call to the dispatcher with the longest idle time. This ensures that all calls are distributed evenly. Plant Vesta ACD provides advance TTY – teletype for speech and hearing impaired callers and can provide instant recall recorder. Supervising Fire Dispatchers are now equipped with the tool to monitor the dispatchers' phone activities. The system will notify supervisors when an outgoing call exceeds a particular time frame. It enables supervisors to engage in "call control," which is useful in the event the supervisor needs to take over a call or join in on a specific call.



***The Fire Department's dispatch console now includes the Computer-Aided Dispatch terminal (at left), the new Automatic Call Distribution system and Map Star, the new mapping system (at right).***

2005, Los Angeles County Fire Department Command and Control Dispatch instituted the latest and advanced Plant Vesta Automatic Call Distribution phone system. Aided by the California 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Fund, the implementation of the Plant Vesta ACD system and Phase II Wireless Geographical Information System (GIS) cost approximately \$1.2 million.

The enhanced Plant Vesta ACD phone system consists of four components: Vesta M-1, Vesta View, Magic, and Map Star. Collectively, the intricate units serve as a sophisticated tracking system. It is designed to track external calls and monitor internal call activities, as well as map Automatic Location Identification (ALI) information for address

has the potential to capture landmarks, Environmental Sensor Networks (ESNs), building footprints and hazardous material information.

It also features an extensive phone database with over one thousand phone numbers preprogrammed into the system for immediate access. It



***Dispatch Supervisor Brendon Peart, standing, joins Fire Dispatcher-II Brian Webb at work at Map Star, the Department's new mapping terminal. This new Dispatch tool displays the location of the 911 caller on the map.***

The Plant Vesta System provides a powerful tool to the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). It affords greater and more comprehensive mapping accuracy, better management tools and quicker emergency response time. In the near future, Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) might be integrated into the system.

# R E T I R E E S

## February Retirees:

Davidson, Errol F., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Staggs, Gordon, Fire Fighter Specialist  
Sinichak, George T., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Sanchez Jr., Henry, Fire Captain  
Parker II, Hubert L., Fire Fighter  
Gutierrez, Mary E., Administrative Services Manager II  
Page, Thomas G., Battalion Chief

## March Retirees:

Hunter, Jeffrey L., Fire Fighter  
Sandeman, Michael S., Battalion Chief  
Cortes, Hernan, Fire Captain  
Broman, Charles A., Fire Captain  
Herrera Jr., Gilbert, Chief Deputy  
Herrera, Barbara K., Head, Plan & Executive Support  
Hokanson, Melvin, Deputy Fire Chief, UC  
Lininger, Robert A., Senior Fire Equipment Mechanic  
Brown, Paul G., Fire Captain  
Szabo, Phillip J., Fire Captain  
Galloway, Steven S., Fire Captain  
Pritchard, Jack E., Fire Captain  
Rehbeck, Rory, Fire Captain  
Borger, Richard F., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Rodriguez, Robert M., Fire Captain  
Whiteing, Kenneth E., Fire Captain  
Brougner, Gary, Supervising Haz Mat Specialist  
Cervantes, Luis M., Fire Captain  
Miller, Donald G., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Roberts, Douglas P., Fire Fighter  
Whisnand, Donald L., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Banks Jr., Roosevelt, Fire Fighter  
Barker, William D., Lt. Ocean Lifeguard  
Core, Christine M., EDP Support Analyst I  
Glonchak, Thomas A., Assistant Fire Chief  
Scott, Eleanor, Senior Secretary III  
Cross, Gary L., Fire Captain  
Hanson, Mark L., Fire Captain  
Lovers Jr., Charles A., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Padgett, James A., Fire Captain  
Abajian, James F., Fire Captain

Apodaca, William A., Fire Captain

Baker, Robert J., Fire Captain  
Baldon, Samuel, Fire Fighter  
Barrera, John J., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Clark, Thomas R., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Courtney, David G., Fire Captain  
Crain, John S., Fire Captain  
Del Castillo, Constante, Prin Survey Map Tech  
Foster, Eric, Fire Fighter Specialist  
Gain, Dale W., Battalion Chief  
Hanson, Timothy L., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Izaguirre, Jeny E., Senior Management Secretary III  
Kaiserski, Joseph M., Fire Fighter  
King, Thomas R., Fire Captain  
Kinney, Steven E., Fire Fighter  
Lassig, Donald F., Fire Captain  
Lombard, Herbert, Fire Captain  
Meredith, Michael C., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Miller, William N., Fire Captain  
Nishida, James N., Supervising Haz Mat Specialist  
Palomarez, Richard, Fire Suppression Aid  
Sturdy, David L., Fire Fighter  
Weister, Richard K., Fire Fighter  
Wilhelm, Kurt F., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Wilk, Richard L., Fire Captain

## April Retirees:

Thompson, Ian M., Fire Fighter Specialist

## May Retirees:

Fujitani, Kimiye H., Secretary III  
Bajenaru, Edison G., Fire Captain

## June Retirees:

Flanders, Daniel R., Fire Captain  
Schriver, Alvin T., Battalion Chief

## July Retirees:

Faragher, Vicki, Sr. Secretary III  
Miller, Thomas F., Fire Fighter Specialist  
Perkins, Stanley, Fire Captain  
Reyna, Herminia, Data Systems Analyst



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A downloadable copy of this issue and back issues of *On the Line* are available online at [www.lacofd.org](http://www.lacofd.org).

### Story ideas?

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### OUR MISSION:

The mission of the Los Angeles County Fire Department is to protect lives, the environment, and property by providing prompt, skillful, and cost-effective fire protection and life safety services.

### OUR VISION:

The Los Angeles County Fire Department will be an exemplary organization acclaimed for our national reputation, our regional strength, and our hometown attentiveness as we provide fire protection and life safety services.

### OUR CORE VALUES:

Integrity, Teamwork,  
Caring, Courage, Commitment  
and Community





**Chief of Human Resources**  
**Carla Williams**

## Checking On Your Emotional Intelligence at Work vs. Your IQ

Most of us are very familiar with an IQ (intelligence quotient); in fact, I'm sure that we all envision ours to be very high! Well, when did you last check you EI (emotional intelligence?)

Emotional intelligence is our natural potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, learn from, manage and understand emotions. In our current environment, we are finding more often than not that we are working within a team environment.

Whether on a project, assignment or fire, we are relying on others in a group setting to accomplish a common goal.

### There are five components to your EI at work:

#### *SELF-AWARENESS*

The ability to recognize and understand your own moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others.

#### *SELF-REGULATION, SELF-MANAGEMENT*

The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. The ability to suspend judgment – think before acting.

#### *SELF-MANAGEMENT, SELF-MOTIVATION*

A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status. You have a tendency to pursue goals with energy and persistence.

#### *SOCIAL AWARENESS, EMPATHY*

The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people. You are skilled at treating people according to their emotional reactions.

#### *RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT, SOCIAL SKILLS*

Ability to manage relationships and build networks. You also are able to find common ground and build support.

Although we encourage you to continue to strive for excellence in your area of expertise, as you are developing your technical skills remember to polish your EI at the same time. The better you are at controlling your emotions the better team player you'll be and the easier it will be to reach the goal.

## PART OF THE CREW:

Thanks to a generous donation by the Hsi-Lai Buddhist Temple in Hacienda Heights, 1,000 of these cuddly "Hometown Angel Bears" are now on patrol throughout Los Angeles County! The project was launched by the Department in March 2006 to help firefighters provide comfort to children who are often traumatized during emergency incidents. These eight-inch tall, brown plush teddy bears feature white angel wings and are now part of the crew – stashed on fire engines and paramedic squads just in case. The last shipment of bears made its way to Catalina Island to help County lifeguards, where they will surely be put to good use during this summer's busy tourist season.



# Welcome Back TESSA!



Mike, Bob, Kevin and Scott are odd names for a newborn girl's playmates, but on the afternoon of June 19, 2005, they became her first friends, when a young woman knocked at the door of Los Angeles County Fire Station 15 in Whittier and asked the four firefighters to accept her hours-old daughter as a Safely Surrendered Baby under California law. Now adopted and one year old, little Tessa

Gabrielle Leavitt returned to Fire Station 15 on May 31, 2006, with her adoptive parents and sister to reunite her with the crew. County Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman and Fourth District Supervisor Don Knabe hosted this special event to showcase the positive way in which the Safely Surrendered Baby Law is working in Los Angeles County. Since the



**Fire Fighter Kevin Cull with Tessa and her new LACoFD teddy bear.**



**Donna Leavitt (center at podium with daughter Alia) shared her story of adoption at the reunion. L-R Rob Leavitt with Tessa, Fire Fighter Scott Tolcher, Fire Fighter Specialist Bob Denton and Fire Fighter Kevin Cull.**

program began in 2001, 45 newborns have been safely surrendered in the County and adopted into loving homes.

Two hours before the mid-morning event, media crews began to arrive and reporters anxiously awaited a glimpse at the thirty-fifth baby to be safely surrendered under the law in the County. As Tessa and her family gathered with crewmembers in the dayroom for a private reunion, reporters soon appeared to ask questions and catch the "Kodak moments" between Tessa and her heroes. Crewmembers Bob Denton,



Kevin Cull and Scott Tolcher were all excited to see Tessa again and happy to see her doing so well with her adoptive family.

"I never thought I'd see her again," said Denton, who smiled widely as he held the little girl in his arms. "It's just nice to see her living a happy life. It could have been so different."

Tessa's adoptive parents, Rob and Donna Leavitt of Thousand Oaks, were intrigued when they discovered in the adoption paperwork that Tessa was one of the County's Safely Surrendered babies.

"We had no idea. When we found that out, we just wanted to bring Tessa down to meet the crew and thank them for taking such good care of her," said Rob Leavitt. "We also wanted to talk to the firefighters about the day she arrived there so that we could share it with Tessa someday."

California's Safely Surrendered Baby Law was first introduced as SB 1368 and went into effect on January 1, 2001. The law allows parents or others with lawful custody to safely surrender a newborn within 72 hours after birth at any hospital or fire station in Los Angeles

County – with no questions asked or fear of prosecution. Steadily, the number of newborn abandonments has decreased since the law went into effect and the County stepped up its publicity efforts.

Over the past five years, Supervisor Knabe has championed the effort to make Safe Surrender more



**Crewmembers were elated to see Tessa return to the station to visit them almost one year after her birth mother safely surrendered her to them at Fire Station 15.**

effective by expanding sites to include all County fire stations and creating partnerships with cities that have independent fire departments. As a result, any fire station in any city in Los Angeles County is now a Safe Surrender site. Knabe has also supported a County-wide public information campaign to raise public

with her very first friends.

"This is the happy ending that we all want to see," said Supervisor Knabe.

"Little Tessa has been given the chance to have a great life with a loving adoptive family, and we will continue to work until no child is ever abandoned in Los Angeles County again."



**Supervisor Don Knabe and Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman share in the excitement of Tessa's return.**



**Tessa (center) and big sister Alia share a fun moment with Mom and Dad.**

For more information about how California's Safely Surrendered Baby Law works in Los Angeles County, visit [www.babysafela.org](http://www.babysafela.org).

# Fire Station Construction Updates

Capital project plans for new fire station constructions and refurbishments have been in the works at Construction & Maintenance Division. Currently, constructions are near

completion at Fire Station 72 (Malibu) and Fire Station 89 (Agoura Hills); the former receiving a replacement station for a three-person engine company and a patrol unit, and the latter, a new battalion headquarters, which will accommodate a three-person engine company, one paramedic squad and 11 dormitory rooms. The Department will open the new fire stations on June 1, 2006. While the aforementioned projects are getting ready to open, other capital projects are underway. For the 2006-07 fiscal year, seven fire stations have been selected to receive various physical changes, ranging from restroom



**Fire Station 72**

93, 136 in Palmdale; Fire Station 82 in La Canada Flintridge; Fire Station 71 in Malibu; Fire Stations 104, 108, 150 in Santa Clarita as well as the Avalon Lifeguard Headquarters in Avalon. The estimated costs of each project will vary from \$350,000 to \$11 million depending on the scope of the structural expansion or



improvement. Some fire stations will be remodeled or expanded to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)/Title 8 Compliance ("Privacy & Access"). Some will undergo renovations to accommodate bigger rigs and modern equipment and others will receive dormitory/kitchen upgrades. Most of the new constructions will maintain current prototype specifications.

Funding for most of the capital projects are provided by the Fire Department Accumulated Capital Outlay (ACO) Fund, which is a budget unit that provides funding for capital improvements, including the replacement and construction of additional fire stations. In addition to the ACO Fund, monetary support for the capital projects in Palmdale (FS 93

and FS 136) comes from the City of Palmdale. For these two projects, the Fire Department will receive a reimbursement of a percentage of the total project cost from Palmdale Fire Facilities Impact Fees. Other funding comes from the Fire



**Fire Station 89**

expansion to constructing a completely new battalion headquarters station. By 2008, two more fire stations will also undergo major renovations.

Construction plans scheduled to begin in mid-2006 through 2010 will include Fire Stations 24,





Department Developer Fee Funds, which will cover the cost of the Santa Clarita's Fire Stations 104, 108, and 150. *The Developer Fee Funds accumulate revenue generated by the Developer Fee Program to fund fire station facilities and related equipment costs.* Santa Clarita falls under the three areas covered by The Developer Fee Program.

As cities continue to grow and become more developed, it is imperative for fire service facilities to maintain stride with the changes. The Fire Department's Construction & Maintenance Project Team is busy at work yet again to ensure that the needs of each fire station are systematically met - one project at a time.

## Fire Station 89 Dedicated in Agoura Hills

On June 16, 2006, the City of Agoura Hills officially celebrated the opening of Los Angeles County Fire Station 89. A formal dedication ceremony, attended by Third District County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman and his Executive Team, the City of Agoura Hills Mayor and Councilmembers, the Director of Public Works and all those involved in the development and construction of the project, took place. Members of the Fire Department and the Agoura Hills community were also invited and in attendance at the ceremony.

Fire Station 89, the first station built within Agoura Hills city limits, became operational on June 1. The new station is strategically located at 29575 Canwood Street on the north side of the 101 freeway at the Kanan Road exit, which will result in improved response times to incidents north of the freeway.

The single-story fire station measures 10,770 square feet and houses one engine company and one paramedic squad. It will also serve as the future Battalion 5 headquarters in the Central Operations Bureau's Division 8. Other components include a fueling station, an emergency generator, a community/training room available for use by community

groups and dormitory quarters for nine shift personnel. The station has a two-bay, drive through apparatus floor and a separate garage for the Battalion Chief's vehicle.

The floor plan is divided into three sections, designed as separate architectural elements by their varying elevations. The west section is the living quarters area,



*Assistant Chief Reggie Lee shares some thought with attendees.*

including dorms, bathrooms and a weight room for firefighters to stay in shape. The center section accommodates the public entry, community/training room, captain's office and shared spaces for crew members, such as the dayroom, dining room and kitchen. The east section features the apparatus room and other operational support spaces.

Fire Station 89 was designed to blend in with its surroundings. The colors



*Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman and Agoura Hills Mayor Denis Weber.*

and materials were chosen to be compatible with the existing materials found on the site (wood, stone, and exposed concrete). The landscaping matches indigenous vegetation.

Construction of the new station spanned over two years, beginning on June 20, 2004, and ending on June 2, 2006. The overall project budget was \$6,436,482, with a hard construction cost of \$3,910,000. The project was funded at no cost to the City of Agoura Hills. Instead, fees generated from the Area 1 Developer Fee Program, in which the city participates, along with the cities of Calabasas, Malibu and the unincorporated areas of the Santa Monica Mountains region, paid for the project.

# Cover Story

# County Fire Expands CERT Program



Established and implemented by the Los Angeles City Fire Department in the mid-1980s, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program has since expanded on a national scale, providing a foundation for a concept of self-reliance before, during and after a major emergency. The devastating Whittier earthquake in 1987 further highlighted the need to train civilians to assist themselves and others following a catastrophe. The main goal of the CERT Program is to provide the opportunity for residents to learn the necessary skills and knowledge to be proactive members within their community in assisting firefighters during a major disaster, when firefighter crews are heavily taxed by a greater number of fire and emergency medical incidents.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department employed the concept in June 2003, offering Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA)-approved CERT training curriculum to residents in all of the cities and communities served. Since then, over 7,000 residents have become members, joining the already enrolled 40,000 members in the City of Los Angeles. The eight-course program consists of 20 hours of classroom instruction and hands-on exercises covering a range of topics, including Disaster Preparedness, Disaster Fire Suppression, Disaster Medical Operations I/II, Light Search & Rescue Operations, Disaster Psychology and Team Organization and Course Review and Disaster Simulation. FEMA plays a major role in the CERT cause by organizing and supporting Train-the-Trainer for fire, medical and emergency management personnel who, in turn, educate the public.

CERT attracts people from all walks of life; most typical are people from neighborhood watch programs, community organizations, workplace employees and religious organizations. Aside from receiving the practical training, having “common sense and a desire to help others are just as important,” said Fire Captain Jeff Vrooman, CERT Program coordinator for the Los Angeles Operational Area within the Los Angeles County

Fire Department. As CERT Coordinator, Vrooman supervises CERT



regional instructors, organizes trainings for contract cities (including cities in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County), develops plans for program improvement and CERT volunteer retention, and also manages CERT grants. To aid in local coordination, each CERT Program within a



city is headed by a CERT Coordinator who oversees a handful of similar responsibilities. "It is important to have a local individual be a coordinator at the level where the team is located. If disaster strikes, that leader will play a key role in directing the team," said Vrooman.

In addition to providing critical support during an emergency, CERT members also assist



in other less intense, non-emergency functions within their communities. For instance, CERT members circulate disaster safety literature, distribute and install smoke detectors, assist elderly residents with smoke alarm battery replacements and actively engage in other useful community disaster prevention and awareness services.

The CERT program is funded by Congress through the Citizen Corps program for states and local governments. However, funds are not always abundantly available. "We

have to be creative in seeking funding to support this important program. Some communities build costs into their local budget, while a few charge participants to attend training to cover the costs for instructors and course materials. In other communities, CERT organizations have worked with corporate sponsors to assist with funding," explained Vrooman.

Despite funding challenges, "growth of the program has been amazing," he added. The Department continues to expand the effort by offering communities more CERT classes, by promoting CERT advisory group meetings to discuss topics pertinent to program funding and to seek ways for program improvements.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Community Emergency Response Team training. To commemorate the success of the program, the City and County of Los Angeles recently organized the National CERT Conference in Los Angeles. The conference theme, "20 Years of Commitment to Community," further accentuates the success of the program. The conference offered a wide range of training workshops catered to further hone member's knowledge and awareness. Joining Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman in attendance were several dignitary guest speakers from state and federal agencies, including California's First Lady, Maria Shriver, and Undersecretary for the Preparedness Directorate, George W. Foresman.

Approximately 450-750 attendees from across the country turned out to show support, network and share ideas.

In keeping with this year's conference theme, the CERT program as a whole continues its commitment toward community preparedness and betterment. In this post-9/11 and post-Katrina era, it is vital for members of the community to be able to meet their immediate life-sustaining needs following a major disaster, especially if local responders are overwhelmed by the immense calamity.



# FIRE SEASON KICKS OFF WITH FIRE SERVICE MONTH

For retailers, the holiday season is the busiest time of year. For firefighters, of course, it's the fire season. From May until November, when the first significant rainstorm typically occurs, it is known as "fire season" throughout Southern California. As brush fires start sparking across the County, local news is often dominated by dramatic footage of firefighters toiling to save homes in high-risk areas. What can start out as a small brush fire of only a few acres can quickly become a major fire, given the right conditions. In L.A., brush fires are big news, often making the national news as well.

Because fire season is so newsworthy, the Department's Public Information team hosts an annual press conference at LACOFD's Camp 2 in La Cañada Flintridge to share fire season predictions with local reporters. The all-morning event is always well attended by fire service experts and media outlets alike. Firefighting equipment is usually on display to give reporters first glance at the season's arsenal in the region's war on brush fire.

During the 2005-2006 winter rain season, many areas of Los Angeles County received normal to below normal annual rainfall. This season, an increase in fine fuel volume created by last year's high rainfall, combined



*(Left) Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman addresses the media at the annual Fire Season Press Conference at Camp 2.*

*(Below) East Region Public Information Officer Ed Osorio is interviewed by local reporters.*

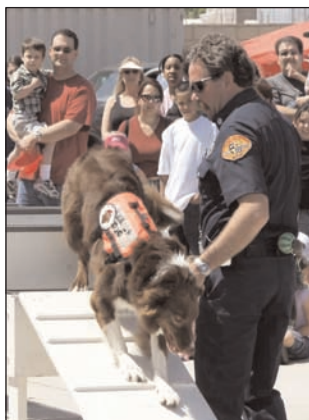


with new growth, have resulted in continuous fine fuel beds throughout the desert, valleys and foothill areas. These fine fuels promote quick ignition, rapid rates of spread and large fire development. Each year, the Department advises local residents by sharing its predictions through ongoing media reports.

## FIRE SERVICE DAY

Throughout the month, activities also take place to help remind residents about the importance of creating defensible space around their homes in preparation for a major brush fire. The month traditionally kicks off on the first day of May, the deadline for all property owners in Los Angeles County to complete their brush clearance efforts. Residents in high-risk areas are

reminded in the Fire Chief's annual fire season message to the community posted on the Department's website about the importance of playing an active role in keeping their properties safe.



*Demonstrations are always popular at the Department's Annual Fire Service Day events. These demonstrations give the public an exciting opportunity to see County Firefighters up close.*







*Sparky the Fire Dog is always a “VIP” with children attending Fire Department events.*

To showcase the professional talents of County firefighters, special public events are held in each of the Department’s three operational regions. Known as “Fire Service Day,” each event is highly publicized to local communities. Free to the public, families are especially drawn to these events to give children an opportunity to learn more about what firefighters do to

keep them safe. This year, Fire Service Days were held at Fire Station 118 in the City of Industry in the East Region, Fire Station 158 in the City of Gardena in the Central Region and Fire Station 129 in the City of Lancaster in the North Region. Over the years, these events have become filled with hands-on opportunities to learn more about the art of firefighting.

Demonstrations, food and special appearances by Special Operations teams, including the Department’s Canine Rescue Unit, make it exciting for all ages.

## FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS HONORED

As exciting as the business of firefighting can be for



many who enjoy the profession, it is also one of the most dangerous occupations around. A special part of Fire Service Month is the annual Firefighters Memorial Ceremony, held this year on May 17, 2006, at the Department’s Firefighters Memorial at its Los Angeles headquarters. It is co-hosted each year by the County of Los Angeles Firefighters Memorial Committee and the Department to honor all fallen County firefighters. Since 1929, 74 members of the Department have made the ultimate sacrifice in public service. During the

*continued on page 14*



# Fire Season Kick Off

(continued from page 13)



ceremony, the names of all fallen firefighters are read.

bagpiper played, the ceremony was well attended by family members and coworkers of the fallen firefighters and other Fire Department personnel who just wanted to pay tribute. All of the family members in attendance were touched by the respect and reverence with which their loved ones were fittingly remembered with special tributes, including the laying of memorial wreaths, the



sounding of the last alarm and a flyover of Department helicopters.

For more information about the amazing work of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, visit [www.lacofd.org](http://www.lacofd.org).

This year, four members of the Department were honored for their service and sacrifice: *Battalion Chief Roy E. Chapman, Fire Captain James E. Sheehan, Fire Fighter Specialist Craig H. Foster and Fire Fighter Crystal Golden-Jefferson.*

Punctuated by uniformed officers, chaplains and the Department's Honor Guard in dress uniform as a firefighter







# ROLLING ON FOR ALISA ANN'S FOUNDATION

What other event features a caravan of 30 to 40 fire engines parading through the streets of L.A. County – when there's no disaster in sight? The annual Firefighters Burn Relay to benefit the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation. Firefighters held their twelfth consecutive fundraiser, stopping to collect donation checks at fire stations at many Southland fire departments. Throughout the year, firefighters raise money to provide services for burn victims and help educate the public about burn prevention through the Foundation's many programs. The relay ended with a grand finale event at the County Fire headquarters training center, featuring food, entertainment and prizes. This year's event brought in over \$70,000.

Thanks to all of the Sponsors and Participating Fire Agencies:

ARCADIA FIRE DEPARTMENT  
BEVERLY HILLS FIRE DEPARTMENT  
BRITISH PETROLEUM FIRE DEPARTMENT  
CHEVRON FIRE DEPARTMENT  
CULVER CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
DOWNEY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
EL SEGUNDO FIRE DEPARTMENT  
HERMOSA BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT  
LA VERNE FIRE DEPARTMENT  
LONG BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT  
LOS ANGELES CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
MANHATTAN BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT  
MONROVIA FIRE DEPARTMENT  
REDONDO BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT  
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UNIVERSAL STUDIOS  
HARRAHS LAUGH FACTORY  
IN AND OUT BURGER  
JAMBA JUICE  
MAGIC MOUNTAIN  
RIVERSIDE LAU  
SOUPPLANTATION  
EL TORITO RESTAURANT  
ACAPULCO RESTAURANT  
L.A. DODGERS  
SKIN CARE LUCIA  
FIRE STATION 116  
TRAILBLAZER  
CALIFORNIA STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOC.  
MCILHENNY  
FIRE STATION 182  
L.A. CLIPPERS  
TV GUIDE  
FIRE STATION 44  
TORRANCE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL  
F&A FEDERAL CREDIT UNION  
FISHER SAFETY  
DEBBIE KEHRET  
L.A. COUNTY FIRE MUSEUM ASSN.



# INFORMATION MANAGEMENT DIVISION: A TRADITION OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE

During the initial hours of the Topanga Incident, while firefighters were hard at work battling the wildland blaze, personnel from the Information Management Division (IMD) were busy setting up the computer network that the incident management team will use. They had been in that situation before, and they knew exactly what to do. Once the network was up and running, they settled down for the long haul, ready to respond to any technical problems that may arise. In the meantime, IMD's geographical information group started gathering the data needed to produce the maps required by the incident commander and his staff. According to IMD Chief Rob Sawyer, in addition to linking four command trailers during the incident, they also provided support to 17 other trailers, including those from outside of Los Angeles County.

While the major incidents that IMD is called upon to assist do not occur frequently, they are always prepared to respond at a moment's notice and for extended periods of time. "We are ready to support an incident no matter how long it takes," said Vic Mesrobian, head of the Systems Administration Section. "We have 24/7 coverage of the event," he said. "Next fire season, we will use wireless network technology and satellite communication in our response. This will save time and improve communication," he added.

Most of their time, however, is spent on routine work like making sure that the Fire Department's computers and networks are running smoothly, and developing computer hardware and software solutions for various organizational units—their internal customers. Because of the ubiquity of computers at the workplace, IMD's support extends to all parts of the organization. Thus, it is hard to imagine that there was a time when IMD did not exist. Prior to 1990, however, the Fire Department's computer services were provided by another County agency, the Internal Services Department.

Around 1990, a study was conducted which recommended that the Fire Department set up its own information technology unit and develop in-house capability to provide

computer services to its members. This unit, which became the Information Management Division, began with five employees. The Department then had approximately 250 personal computers (PC's) based on the Intel 80286 microprocessor and running on DOS (Disk Operating System).

According to Mesrobian, since those early days, the Department has undergone five generations of hardware and

software upgrades. The latest one took place in September 2005, when IMD completed the Department-wide migration to the Windows XP operating system. All personal computers now use the Intel Pentium microprocessor. (This chip would have been called "80586" had Intel continued its original naming convention.) IMD currently supports around 1,500 desktop personal computers, 300

laptops, and 150 handheld devices. They even maintain Blackberry wireless devices, which they had configured to receive Departmental e-mails.

Most of these computers are connected to the Department's wide-area network. This network brings together four administrative sites and 185 locations (fire stations and camps) dispersed throughout Los Angeles County. It uses 65 servers and high-speed T1 and T3 communication lines to enhance response times and reliability. It supports electronic mail (e-mail) and facilitates access to the Internet. With e-mail, messages are received by their intended recipients almost instantaneously. Employees send e-mails to one another to share information and coordinate work. "ALLSITES" e-mails are routinely used to disseminate information to all personnel. With Internet access, e-mail may be sent outside of the organization, and research may be conducted on any topic using online references.

In addition to supporting the network, IMD also maintains 46 application systems. These are the programs that individuals and organizational units use to solve a problem or to make their work more efficient. Among these application systems are Payroll, NFIRS (National Fire Incident Reporting



**IMD's leaders: Michal Ashley, Rob Sawyer, Mona Wysong, Vic Mesrobian, and Tim Smith.**



System), CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch), IPFIRS (Internet Protocol Fire Incident Reporting System), and eDAPTS (Electronic Development and Permit Tracking System).

In August 2005, one of these applications—the Helicopter Water Resource Directory jointly developed by IMD’s Geographic Information Systems Section and the Air Operations Section—was selected for the “Best Innovative Use of Technology Award” by the Los Angeles County’s Quality and Productivity Commission. This system, conceived by Chief Deputy Michael Dyer, gives incident commanders a guide to optimize the water delivery efforts of helicopters. The latest application that IMD implemented is the browser-based

Warehouse Inventory System used by the Pacoima Warehouse.

However, many of these systems are so-called “legacy” systems, which are based on older technology. Most of them are not integrated and, as a result, data

duplication occurs. The problem with data duplication, aside from wasting storage space, is that it takes effort to ensure that all copies of the same data are identical. Over time, the copies begin to have different values, resulting in inaccurate information. Another problem is that if a report needs data from several disparate sources, a lot of manipulation will have to be done before the data can be used.

Recognizing these problems, IMD Chief Sawyer plans to put most of the application systems in a data warehouse. (This is similar to a database but bigger and more powerful.) They will be integrated, thereby eliminating data duplication while facilitating the generation of information for various users. Most applications will be web-based, like many Internet sites, that provide electronic commerce (e-commerce) services. Web-based applications are easier to maintain and very scalable; that is, you may increase the number of persons concurrently using them without any noticeable loss of performance.

In August 2006, IMD plans to have a new server and software infrastructure. After this, they will start the migration from Novell applications to Microsoft software. For example, the software that the Department uses for e-mails, Novell Groupwise, will be replaced by Microsoft Exchange and Outlook.

IMD’s other plans include:

- Upgrading NFIRS, Timekeeping System, Training and

Certification System, and other legacy systems;

- Developing a new Learning Management System, which will allow the Department to hold training classes online, track the progress of students, and store training records in personnel files;
- Automating forms;
- Upgrading the intranet to use portal technology, which will allow all users to customize their interface according to their tastes and information requirements

All of these plans are integrated in the IMD’s three-year Strategic Plan (2005-2008), which guides the growth of the division and ensures that IMD will be in the best position to support the Fire Department’s mission, goals, and objectives.

As part of the Strategic Plan, IMD was recently reorganized in order to be more responsive to the Department’s needs. Vic Mesrobian heads the Systems Administration Section; Mona Wysong oversees the

Business Analysis and Office Administration Section; Michal Ashley is in charge of the Applications Development Section and Tim Smith leads the Geographic Information Systems Section.

While working hard to support

the Department’s emergency and business operations, the division’s leaders are spurred on by the vision of becoming the information technology (IT) leader in the fire service. “We’re starting to be not just the IT division within the Department, but one of the leaders out there that other fire IT divisions look to for answers. We want to be on the cutting edge using state-of-the-art technology,” said Sawyer.

Sawyer is convinced that he has the people to make this vision a reality. “I have been to several IT divisions in the County and I can say that the IT staff here is probably the best IT staff I have worked with. They are very dedicated and very much part of the Department,” he said.

With its tradition of service excellence, IMD stands ready for the challenges of the future and will continue to play an important role in the Department by providing the whole organization with the information technology support it needs to accomplish its mission, realize its vision, and successfully carry out its operations.



**IMD Assistant Chief Vic Mesrobian waits for a fire map at the Topanga Incident command post.**



**Senior Systems Aid Christine Rodriguez monitors the Department's wide-area network.**

Don't Just Survive...

# THRIVE!

That was the theme of the first Los Angeles County Fire Department Employee Health Fair, held at Department headquarters on February 22, 2006. Promoting this theme gave organizers an opportunity to reach beyond traditional health fair activities and information and really try to motivate employees to take a more personal role in actively patrolling their health. Over 350 employees attended and were encouraged to jump start their exercise programs and make some positive lifestyle changes.

To help them get started, Camp 2 Chef Ricky Washington and his team prepared a number of heart-healthy Weight Watchers recipes for a nominal fee. Employees were invited to help themselves to the buffet and then enjoy lunch under the "big top" canopy.

Another draw was an invitation to join the "Footrace for Fitness" walking competition to encourage employees to put on their sneakers and get moving. Healthy recipes submitted by Department employees were also provided to each in attendance.



*At a recent support group meeting of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network held at headquarters, County Mayor Michael D. Antonovich (at center, with son Michael, Jr., and daughter Mary Christine) and Chief Deputy of Operations Gary Lockhart (third from right) gave their support to the Network's board of directors, including (l-r) Fire Fighter Specialist Dave Gillotte, Fire Fighter Paramedic Paul "Sodapop" Soteropoulos, Fire Fighter Specialist Jerry McClelland, Fire Fighter Paramedic Mike Dubron, Violeta Villalobos and Fire Fighter John Thomas.*

Highlights also included several guest speakers, including Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman, as he rededicated the recently upgraded Paul Donohue Fitness Center in the presence of the late Captain Donohue's family members and



(above) Many national health organizations actively participated by providing important health information for Fire Department employees.

(left) Fire Fighter Paramedic Mike Dubron presents a plaque to members of the Donohue Family from the Fire Fighter Cancer Support Network. L-R: Mother in law Mary Browning, daughter Kaitlin, wife Gwen and son Brendan Donahue, Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman and Dr. Franklin Pratt, Medical Director.







***A representative of the American Heart Association provides important health information to Fire Department employees.***

sponsors included body scans, exercise equipment, exercise videos and t-shirts, as well as gift cards.

The success of the health fair was made possible through employee participation and the collaborative



***EMS Field Nurse Mary Valance, RN, right, checks Planning Division employee Ken Chin's blood pressure.***

With obesity now reaching epidemic proportions in America, Medical Director Franklin Pratt, MD, stressed the importance of making lifestyle changes to enhance quality of life and extend lifespan. Fire Fighter Paramedic Mike Dubron also shared his own emotional and physical journey with cancer and introduced the Firefighter Cancer Support Network as a participant in the fair. As founder and president of the organization, he explained his vision to see a national support network available to all fire department employees and their immediate family members.

efforts of the health fair committee, peer support networks, Camp 2, as well as the prizes and handouts provided by the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, Harbor General's CT Scanner, Weight Watchers, L.A. Gym and a generous donation of exercise videos from famous fitness trainer Kiana Tom.

Interactive highlights of the fair included the opportunity for employees to meet members of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, Critical Incident Stress Management Team and Peer Fitness trainers. Employees also received free blood pressure screenings performed by EMS nurses and obtain educational materials on cholesterol screening, cardiac risk factors, body scans and nutrition. Many valuable raffle prizes contributed by generous



***Fire Fighter Paramedic Mike Dubron shares some of his personal experience with cancer and the reasons why he founded the Firefighter Cancer Support Network.***



***Decorated with festive balloons and workout weights as centerpieces, employees enjoyed a heart-healthy buffet lunch catered under the big top by Camp 2.***



# Digging Into our History

*By Retired Fire Captain Dave Boucher*



Pictured this issue is a one-of-a-kind purchase made in 1927 by the Forester & Fire Warden portion of our Department. The previous year, an experimental construction camp had been built north of the town of La Verne in the San Jose Division (Bn. 2 today). The construction personnel consisted of “juvenile delinquents” under the protection of the L.A. County Probation Department. In order to transport the young men to their work sites, as supervised by the Forestry Department, a safe mode of transportation was needed. This led to the purchase of this 1927 Pierce-Arrow bus.

A word about the Pierce-Arrow company is probably in order here. Old-timers among us will recall that the Pierce-Arrow automobile was among the finest luxury types built in this country. Originating with the 1901 model, the company continued to produce vehicles until 1938, when competition from Cadillac, Lincoln and Packard, combined with residual effects of the Great Depression, finally drove it out of business. In the late 1920s, their automobile prices ran from low \$2,595 to as high as \$6,250 for the seven-passenger Town Car.\* A fair estimate of the cost of the pictured bus should be in the \$10,000 range.

Driver Harry Reinmuller, pictured with his vehicle, was no doubt justly proud of his vehicle and took excellent care of it. Its two-toned forest green and Kilarney green paint scheme rendered it a most attractive vehicle. Its straight-eight cylinder engine developed 132 h.p. at 3,000 RPM. It also came

equipped with 4-wheel brakes — not a standard feature on vehicles during the time.\*

By looking carefully, one can read the “Camp 10” sign permanently positioned over the windshield and two small red warning lights on either side of the sign. There is no siren visible, but it could have had a friction-drive siren underneath, a type driven by the flywheel.

I have not spoken with anyone to date who can tell me when this bus was placed out of service and/or sold. Several photos have surfaced showing early 1930s Chevrolet stakeside 2-ton trucks being used to haul hand crews about the county for various reasons. One picture shows two 1934 Chevrolet trucks parked at a fire in Malibu after discharging their crews. With much shorter wheelbases than the bus, those trucks could undoubtedly have traversed the many twisting, winding and steep motorways/truck trails found during brush fires in the often steep Southern California mountain areas.

An interesting side note: some years later, the driver shown in this photo became the foreman at the shops serving the Department of Forester and Fire Warden for apparatus repair and maintenance. As time goes on, more and more pieces of the puzzle which is our history are fitting together.

More next time.....Dave Boucher

\* Data from “The Encyclopedia of American Cars” by James H. Maloney, Crestline Press, 1978